



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2027 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2027-239

**Proposal Title:** Navigating Our Metro to Efficiency and Clean Energy

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Brian Krohnke

**Organization:** Community Power

**Office Telephone:** (612) 208-2297

**Email:** brian@communitypowermn.org

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Expansion of energy efficiency navigation program for under invested communities, to create a sustainable revenue model. Concurrent modeling and feasibility study of clean energy commercial integration opportunities with aligned partners.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$1,652,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2030

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Energy (E)

### Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Region(s): Metro

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Region(s): Metro

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Narrative

### **Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

Weatherization and replacing inefficient home heating and cooling appliances are two of the most impactful ways Minnesotans can improve family economies and indoor air quality, while fighting climate change. Yet the pace of adoption and implementation is too slow, especially among Low and Moderate Income members of our population who most need access to the cost-savings, health, and stable-housing benefits of energy efficiency programs. One bottleneck we've identified, over six years of engagement with an ever-evolving group of 15~20 Community-Based Organizations, is the lack of culturally relevant, community-rooted outreach and support to navigate the complex network of existing programs in Minnesota.

Likewise, many communities and individuals who wish to benefit from the affordability and health benefits of improved home weatherization, new appliances and clean energy are left out while some programs struggle to find participants. Critical questions are left unanswered: What is the economic benefit to our community of hosting a solar garden? How can our community begin or join an energy efficiency program to benefit our residents? Business models offering potential solutions often come from out of state, but the answers should be found and funded locally, strengthening our state and its resilience in the face of change.

### **What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

We seek to expand and extend Our Good Energy Connections (GEC) pilot program to support three current staff, add two additional Neighborhood Energy Navigators and one Outreach Specialist for three years of continued activities. Our team provides program-agnostic energy efficiency navigation services to Minneapolis and Saint Paul residents, giving free support to participants to understand, apply-to, and follow-through on energy efficiency upgrades that best fit their needs. Our Neighborhood Energy Navigators work with homeowners, 1-4 unit building renters, and 1-4 unit building property owners to achieve home upgrades that reduce home energy burden and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from their homes. By extending and expanding our pilot program we will complete proof-of-concept and explore potential sustainable funding structures such as Minnesota's Environmental Conservation and Optimization (ECO) framework and others.

As we continue our pilot program, we are also working with coalition partners to accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency, weatherization and electrification measures across the Twin Cities Metro. With this proposal we will support staff time to engage with, do business modeling, planning, and feasibility analysis of emergent opportunities, and of greater commercial integration with aligned, coalition partners who include other nonprofits, neighborhood organizations, and a member-owned clean energy cooperative.

### **What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?**

We will engage with at least 6,000 Twin Cities Low & Moderate Income residents directly, educating and sharing experiences with tangible home improvement projects with strong emissions and bill savings potential.

We will provide navigation to 1,200 Minneapolis and St Paul residents helping them to reduce energy consumption and to transition to healthier, energy efficient appliances, representing 1,380 metric tons of Green House Gas equivalents annually in avoided emissions, and important bill savings for participants.

We will develop a new organization sustaining service-business model, commercially integrated with partners, to fill unmet needs in the service of rapid decarbonization.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Expansion and continuation of our Good Energy Connections pilot program

**Activity Budget:** \$1,160,185

**Activity Description:**

The objective of this activity is to continue and increase the reach of the existing Good Energy Connections pilot to engage at least 6,000 Minneapolis and Saint Paul residents with a goal of navigating 1,200 residents through home energy upgrades by July '29. The first tasks include hiring two additional Neighborhood Energy Navigators and one Outreach Specialist, leading to three new full-time jobs. Then, the next tasks are creating and implementing a community-focused outreach strategy to reach 6,000 residents of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, leading to 1,200 homes navigated and accompanied through, at minimum, weatherization upgrades. Four Neighborhood Energy Navigators will work with homeowners, 1-4 unit building renters, and 1-4 unit property owners to identify funding options to cover all or a portion of the cost for home energy upgrades, and navigate them throughout the entire process. Lastly, program staff, trusted advisors, and community leaders will evaluate and analyze the results of Good Energy Connections throughout the expanded pilot period. Those lessons learned will be compiled into a package that can be shared with other interested parties around the state of Minnesota.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire three new full-time staff for Good Energy Connections	September 30, 2027
6,000 residents engaged in home energy education through a community-focused outreach strategy	March 31, 2030
1,200 participant's homes are navigated through, at minimum, weatherization upgrades	June 30, 2030
Reporting package on lessons learned from the Good Energy Connections Pilot prepared for distribution	June 30, 2030

### Activity 2: Modeling and analysis of opportunities for expanding energy efficiency and community implementation of clean energy

**Activity Budget:** \$206,022

**Activity Description:**

The objective of this activity is to identify and accelerate other energy efficiency related projects in the Twin Cities Metro through collaboration and sharing of insights and resources. We also seek to develop an additional revenue generating activity that contributes to our organization's sustainability. Anecdotal information and experience tells us that across the metro, local governments, nonprofits, individuals and companies are interested in, or are currently developing, their own energy efficiency programs, or are adopting others that are available through our energy utilities.

We seek to accelerate the development of community-led, aligned programs given their out-sized role in creating community wealth, jobs and well being. The first task will be to establish connections with 30-40 Twin Cities Metro community contacts generated through project outreach. Second, we will refine and filter this list of interested parties, seeking to model the 10 most promising business opportunities. Third, we will conduct feasibility analysis of this top-ten, sorting them towards potential funding or other development tracks.

As we go through this process, we will develop business planning documents and flesh-out an opportunity we have identified with aligned partners in the clean energy advocacy ecosystem.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
30-40 connections with community-based opportunities and their contacts established and documented	June 30, 2028
10 community leads selected for ongoing work from initial pool	December 31, 2028
10 pre-feasibility and feasibility study documents produced and analysed	June 30, 2029
Development track recommendations and planning documents created	March 31, 2030

### Activity 3: Feasibility study and business modelling of Good Energy Connections with ECO Triennial Funding and/or emergent opportunities

**Activity Budget:** \$285,793

**Activity Description:**

The objective of this activity is to identify and evaluate what’s necessary for long term Good Energy Connections expansion and full implementation. The first tasks will be to conduct an analysis on the costs and benefits associated with Good Energy Connections on a per participant basis, and an analysis of results related to the effectiveness of the expanded pilot program. Measures analyzed would include uptake rates from outreach strategy, program feedback, existing energy efficiency upgrade programs and resources, and others. The Program Development Manager will work with Program Staff and trusted advisors to complete the analyses. The results will be compared to existing utility, city, state, and federal efficiency programs. Ultimately, a proposal package will be created for identifying funding sources, such as ECO Triennial Funding, for the full implementation of the Good Energy Connections program in the Metro or throughout Minnesota. In the final semester of the project, we will use this package to discuss, negotiate and secure future funding for the program.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
A per participant analysis of costs and benefits	September 30, 2029
Analysis of results related to the effectiveness of the Pilot	September 30, 2029
A proposal package that includes a path for full implementation of the Good Energy Connections	November 30, 2029
Agreement secured for the full implementation of Good Energy Connections	May 31, 2030

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Kyle Goertz	Community Power	Program Development Manager	Yes
Alice Madden	Community Power	Energy Democracy Program Manager	Yes
Leticia Jones	Community Power	Co-Executive Director	Yes

## Dissemination

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**

Our Good Energy Connections program's website is <https://www.goodenergyconnections.org/>. With this project we will contract a full-time Outreach & Communications specialist tasked with contributing to a communications strategy, then producing social media content for the program and for Community Power's aligned programmatic work. This base for our dissemination work will include direct outreach to community and local government partners across the Twin Cities Metro, in person presentations, webinars, letters to the editor, short didactic videos, press releases, and other standard communications products. We will be certain to follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Guidelines and use correct social media tags and trust fund logo where appropriate.

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?**

The current phase of our Good Energy Connections pilot is operating into 2027 with federal, state and philanthropic funding. The energy efficiency services we help residents access, that otherwise may have fallen through the cracks in a complex program landscape, will be a strong candidate for Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) funding in the triennium beginning in June, 2029.

The business modelling, feasibility study and analysis component of this project will seek to knit our work and growing outreach capacities, commercially, with clean energy transition work done by coalition partners across the Twin Cities.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Brian Krohnke

**Job Title:** Co Executive Director

**Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.**

Results-driven nonprofit leader offering extensive experience (20+ years) in multicultural, nonprofit contexts with strong communications skills in native English and fluent, professional Spanish. Valuable combination of technical, problem-solving, and soft skills that propel the timely resolution of unique problems and issues, centering people while strengthening operations through team building. Adept at identifying quality prospective projects, assessing technical and financial feasibility, conducting project design, budgeting, operations, oversight, monitoring, and reporting.

Since April of 2024, Brian has been a Co-Executive Director of Community Power, whose job description includes the responsibilities documented and detailed in the LCCMR's Project Manager Expectations. For this effort he will be the

primary point person for the project with LCCMR and DNR Grants Unit; He is authorized to represent the project on behalf of the organization and partners and respond to questions and requests from LCCMR as needed; and he is authorized to submit the proposal on behalf of the organization as indicated in the resolution by our organization's board. As part of this board authorization, and in the furtherance of his role, he is also authorized to submit the work plan and make changes as needed to the work plan on behalf of the organization, as well as the remaining reporting, budgeting, and quality assurance aspects, guiding the outcomes delineated in the work plan.

In prior nonprofit organization leadership roles, Brian has managed projects with funding from public and private partners in the USA, Belgium, and Ecuador, at budget levels similar to the proposed work with LCCMR funding.

**Organization:** Community Power

**Organization Description:**

Emerging from a citizens' campaign for Minneapolis Energy Options in 2013, Community Power was incorporated as a Minnesota organization in January 2014, obtaining 501c3 status as recognized by the IRS in March of 2016. Community Power's mission is to educate and activate Minnesotans to create clean, local, equitable, affordable, and resilient energy systems.

We have six full-time and one half-time staff, and are also supported by a full-time VISTA fellow.

Since 2018 we have co-convened the Twin Cities Energy Efficiency cohort, together with up to twenty community-based organizations in Minneapolis and Saint Paul alongside CUB, CEED, and CERTS. This group, through shared energy learning and analysis of the challenges faced by our historically underinvested communities, identified a bottleneck in the adoption of energy efficiency practices – trusted, community-based, program-neutral navigation – giving birth to our Energy Efficiency Navigators pilot program, rebranded as Good Energy Connections (GEC) in 2025.

Community Power, throughout its history, has helped Minnesotans and the local governments that represent them understand and engage with the energy system to drive climate action, affordability, and improving community resilience. We've done this through popular education, workshops, appointed commission roles, and technical support.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Co-Executive Director #1		Project Manager			25%	0.99		\$123,259
Program Development Manager		Lead staff program development			16%	3		\$274,050
Energy Democracy Program Manager		Project Liaison			16%	0.99		\$115,710
Neighborhood Energy Navigator (existing staff)		Neighborhood Energy Navigator			16%	6		\$395,217
Neighborhood Energy Navigator (new hires)		Neighborhood Energy Navigator			16%	5.5		\$345,030
Outreach Specialist		Outreach & Communications			16%	2.75		\$239,250
Co-Executive Director #2		HR & Project Administration			22%	0.45		\$53,033
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,545,549</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota	Subaward	Assisting in project planning, evaluation, & monitoring				0.39		\$48,672
Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS)	Subaward	Assisting in project planning, evaluation, & monitoring				0.39		\$48,672
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$97,344</b>

<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Reimbursement for personal transportation 10,400 miles (289 miles a month at 2026 IRS rate of \$.725/mile and assuming small cost increases during project).	Visits to beneficiaries and project partners in the Twin Cities Metro region					\$7,607
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$7,607</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	Contracts, work products and reports, 3,000 pages at \$0.50 per page	Project management and divulgation					\$1,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,652,000</b>

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
---------------	---------------------	-------------	--

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
Cash	McKnight Foundation	General program support	Potential	\$300,000
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
<b>Non-State</b>				
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	-
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$1,952,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [e5e49ad2-cdb.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Excerpt of program flyer showing maps of focus areas and other relevant information for potential beneficiaries....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Community Power 2024 Audit	<a href="#">f1e783fc-629.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Board President authorization letter from provided template	<a href="#">3d44238f-bbe.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

#### *Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Good Energy Connections Flyer excerpt	<a href="#">03ad1b9b-78a.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

No

**Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

No

**Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?**

No

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?**

No

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:**

Kyla Sisson & Freddy Alvarado, Community Power Neighborhood Energy Navigators

**Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements**

N/A